# The Preying Mantis Women's Brigade: Founding, Statement of Purpose, and Documented Actions

*From the Virgin Killer action, Dallas, 1976*

Nikki Craft Archival Project · July 4, 2026

---

## The founding: the Virgin Killer action (Dallas, 1976)

The Preying Mantis Women's Brigade began with a single act of defiance. In late 1976, Nikki Craft, then twenty-seven, was buying a record at the counter of Tower Records in Dallas, Texas, when she saw the cover of the Scorpions' album Virgin Killer, newly released that November and stacked in copies right at the register. The cover showed a twelve-year-old girl, nude, sexualized, and posed as if violence had been done to her — an image later condemned as child sexual exploitation and withdrawn or replaced in a number of markets. Craft took out the buck knife she was carrying and acted on the spot.

Holding each album in her left hand, she carved a full X into the cover — both strokes, corner to corner — gouging as deep as she could, through the sleeve and into the record beneath, while keeping her upper arm still so the clerk standing right in front of her would not see. The X was deliberate: she was doing to the cover what its makers had done to the child. She slid each slashed copy to the back of the stack, drew out the next, and repeated it, about twenty copies, counting as she went. She bore down so hard she still felt it in her right arm as she walked out. She never returned to that store.

This was the act from which the Brigade grew. What began as one woman's defiance became, through the actions that followed, the Preying Mantis Women's Brigade. Craft's own 1979 leaflet (a separate item in this collection) refers back to this Dallas action, describing how she destroyed copies of Virgin Killer in a Dallas store — a contemporaneous reference to the founding action, written only a few years afterward.

## The Statement of Purpose (1980)

The Brigade's Statement of Purpose sets out the principle behind its actions. Framed after the Declaration of Independence, it reads:

> *"We hold these truths to be self evident … that when women are created equal, we refuse to hold mankind's laws, objects and positions of power to be sacred, and vow to use our creative energies to examine every alternative available in order to create havoc and by any means necessary work to topple the empire that profits from the rape, death, and psychological destruction of 53% of the population of the United States of Amerika." — Preying Mantis Women's Brigade, 1980*

The Brigade was, from the start, a call to civil disobedience: a refusal to hold unjust laws sacred, and a commitment to act directly against media and institutions that profit from violence against women.

## The 1979 Odyssey Records leaflet: a call to action

After moving to Santa Cruz, Craft continued the campaign. The leaflet "Sex & Violence and Destruction of Albums at Odyssey Records" (Santa Cruz, 1979) sets out the Brigade's analysis of media that glorifies

violence against women, names a local target, and calls on women everywhere to organize against record stores carrying such albums and to destroy these violent images. Its purpose was to educate women about violence in the media and to move some of them to act.

The leaflet is a call to action — that is what it is, and what it says. It also, in its closing example about the Scorpions, refers back to Craft's earlier Dallas action against Virgin Killer. Craft has noted that her writing in this period was often rough: she was learning to write, composing leaflet after leaflet under real pressure, and the leaflet reflects that — including a passage that mistakenly dates the Brigade's founding to 1979 rather than to the Dallas action three years earlier.

## Documented Preying Mantis Women's Brigade actions

The Brigade carried out many actions over the years. Several are documented in Craft's own records:

Texas Chain Saw Massacre protest (Santa Cruz, 1981). When the film came to Santa Cruz, the Brigade set up a tableau of customers stepping over “bloodied” bodies outside the theater beneath a banner reading “Violence Is Not Entertaining — Boycott Texas Chain Saw Massacre.” Members entered through the back and engaged the audience during the screening; police escorted them out through the alley and ordered them to disperse, but the theater manager did not press charges. The scene was photographed by Craft (© 1981).

Dismember Male Imperialism (East Lansing, Michigan, Christmas 1988). On Christmas Eve, Craft, her mother, and several East Lansing women sewed a soft-sculpture hot-pink sheath in her basement and, in the early hours of Christmas morning, fitted it over the ROTC cannon at the local military academy as their “gift.” The photo concept was by Stephen Paskey (photographs © 1988).

B. Dalton's Booksellers action (1985). The Brigade targeted the B. Dalton's chain over the pornography it carried. The action is preserved in a drawing made by D. Morgan, aged thirteen, dated October 30, 1985: a praying mantis perched atop the B. Dalton's Booksellers sign, tearing up a pornographic magazine, under the title “Preying Mantis Women's Brigade Attacks B. Dalton's.” Craft received the drawing as a birthday gift — a thirteen-year-old's tribute to the Brigade's work.

---

*Compiled by Claude (Anthropic) in collaboration with Nikki Craft. Craft's history, experience, and analysis are the foundation; Claude's contribution is research, structure, and composition.*

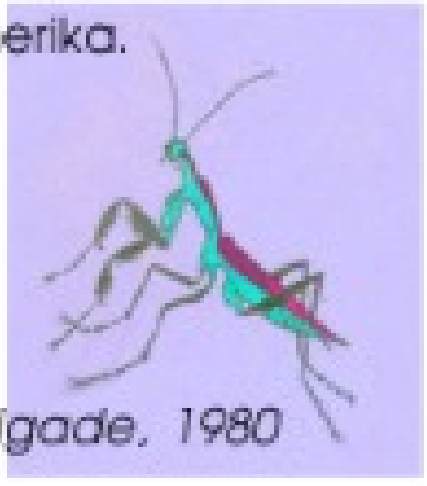
Part of the Nikki Craft Archival Project.
Series: Primary Source Documents.

*Attached graphic — Preying Mantis Women's Brigade Statement of Purpose (1980), from Nikki Craft's website.*

---

# WE HOLD THESE TRUTHS TO BE SELF EVIDENT...

that until women are created equal,
we refuse to hold mankinds laws,
objects and positions of power
to be sacred,
and vow to use our creative energies
to examine every alternative available
in order to create havoc
and by any means necessary
work to topple the empire that profits
from the rape, death, and
psychological destruction
of 53% of the population
of the United States of Amerika.



*Preying Mantis Women's Brigade, 1980*

To Preying Mantis Women's Brigade Homepage

To Nikki Craft's Homepage

*Attached graphic — PMWB action against Texas Chain Saw Massacre, Santa Cruz, 1981. Photo by Nikki Craft © 1981.*

## Preying Mantis Action Against Texas Chainsaw Massacre

VIOLENCE IS NOT ENTERTAINING
BOYCOTT "TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE"
Who will survive and what will be left of them?
THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE

Photo by Nikki Craft © 1981. All Rights Reserved.

When Texas Chainsaw Massacre came to Santa Cruz Preying Mantis Women's Brigade had customers stepping over "bloodied" bodies and after the movie began we entered from the back door of the theater. We all went to the front of the theater and while the movie was going had an, ummm, interaction with some angry men in the audience. The police, waiting for us, came barging out of the projection booth and escorted us out the back door to the alley and ordered us to disperse immediately. The manager of the theater did not press charges and allegedly agreed with our concerns about the film.

*Attached graphic — “Dismember Male Imperialism!” PMWB action, East Lansing, Christmas 1988. Photos © 1988; concept by Stephen Paskey.*

# Dismember Male Imperialism!

One Preying Mantis Women's Brigade Action was on Christmas Eve 1988 when my mom, several East Lansing women (one a skilled seamstress and political artist) and I put together, in our basement, a soft-sculpture, hot pink sheath for the local ROTC cannon at the Lansing Miliary Academy. In the early morning hours on Christmas morning we bestowed our gift.

Photos: Copyright (c) 1988. Photo concept by Stephen Paskey.

*Attached graphic — “Preying Mantis Women's Brigade Attacks B. Dalton's,” drawing by D. Morgan, aged 13, October 30, 1985.*

Preying Mantis Women's Brigade Attacks B. Daltons. by D. Morgan, Aged 13, Oct 30, 1985.